

This information can be found on Senator Levin's web site at:

<http://levin.senate.gov/newsroom/speeches/speech/flood-assistance-for-upper-peninsula-of-michigan>

## Flood Assistance for Upper Peninsula of Michigan

Tuesday, September 16, 2003

In May of this year, unusually heavy rainfall occurred in four counties of the Upper Peninsula of my home state of Michigan -- Baraga, Gogebic, Marquette and Ontonagon Counties -- causing rivers and streams throughout the area to swell out of their banks, inflicting severe and widespread damages. These four counties are not able to absorb this disaster as they have overall unemployment and poverty rates higher than the state average.

The greatest damages occurred in Marquette County where an earthen dike at Silver Lake Basin failed, sending an estimated 8 billion gallons of water cascading downstream through central Marquette County and the city of Marquette toward Lake Superior. Rapidly moving water and massive amounts of trees, logs and other debris has severely undercut many sections of the riverbank, making them unstable and creating serious public safety and environmental concerns.

Damages to one of the power generation facilities, the Presque Isle plant in the city of Marquette, resulted in shutdown for more than 30 days. Without power, two iron ore mines, which produce about 20% of our nation's annual iron ore output, were shut down, idling 1,200 workers. These mines contribute nearly \$115 million in personal income annually and are two of the largest employers in Marquette County. Even this temporary shutdown has had a significant negative impact on the local, regional, state and national economies. Dozens of other area businesses, institutions and private homeowners were also seriously impacted.

Current estimates of economic damages alone to these counties, mostly to Marquette County, are calculated at over \$100 million. There have been severe impacts to roads, bridges, culverts, water control structures, utility infrastructure and environmental and ecological damage to the waterways resulting from this flooding. When the public damage figures, currently estimated at \$18-20 million, are combined with those high economic impacts caused by the loss of electrical power generation capabilities and the environmental degradation to the area, it paints a devastating picture for this area in Michigan. Further, this area is still recovering from the flooding that occurred last year. The fact that these counties have suffered two major disasters in two years is extremely significant.

Without our assistance, Marquette and the other three counties will have a difficult, if not impossible, task of recovering from this disaster. And the health, safety, economic vitality, and quality of life of the communities and their citizens will certainly suffer for years to come.

I urge my colleagues to support this request for emergency funding for flood damage remediation assistance.